Smutty
NEIGHBOR
EROTCA ROMANCE SHORT STORY FOR WOMEN
EROTIC SMUTT: OLDER-MAN YOUNG WOMAN AGE GAP QUICK-READ
izzie vee & dolliana jeffries

Smutty Neighbor Erotca Romance Short Story for Women

Erotic Smutt: Older-Man Young Woman Age Gap Quick-Read

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by Izzie Vee & Dolliana Jeffries

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Chapter 1

Paige

"And you said this apartment has a swimming pool, right?" I asked the landlord as we stepped out of the elevator.

"Yes ma'am; that's one of our many perks. I could show you if you wish," he said, a smile on his face as he eagerly awaited my response.

"I'd like that," I said, and he nodded, turning to head back inside the elevator.

We went back down, and he led us to the back of the apartment. I smiled as soon as I saw the glistening water in the long rectangular pool. The space was even bigger than I expected with a few lounge chairs surrounding it.

"It's great," I said, turning to him. I caught his gaze on my breast. His chubby cheeks brightened when I caught him. He immediately cleared his throat and looked away.

"I'm glad you think so. You like to swim?"

"I do," I said. "I was on the swim team back in college."

He nodded, looking impressed. "Well, I'm glad we have just what you need."

I offered a stiff smile as I turned and walked away. He stumbled, trying to catch up to me. "If you have any complaints, don't hesitate to call me."

"Of course," I said, pausing to stretch my hand out.

He seemed confused for a second, but then he placed the keys in my hand.

"Oh."

"Thanks."

I walked away; happy he didn't follow behind me. I went back up to my apartment and pushed the door open. I knew I'd already love it from the pictures I'd seen on the website, and reality didn't disappoint. It was the exact same, with floor to ceiling windows extending from end to end, showcasing the view of the city ahead.

The inside was spacious with minimal furniture – just the way I liked it. It was a refreshing difference from the apartment I lived in before. I was just glad I had a new job that allowed me to afford a

place like this.

I flopped down on the grey sofa and smiled, feeling at ease. There weren't any train tracks in the distance or the high-pitched wails of sirens. It was just silence. A girl could really get comfortable in a place like this.

I didn't know when I dozed off, but when I got up, I winced at the discomfort in my neck. I stretched to ease the pain and then yawned as I went searching for my phone. It was getting dark out, and as I smacked my lips together, I realized I was hungry.

The plan was to go grocery shopping as soon as I settled in, but I'd gotten up early and had taken the train here today. I was tired.

Yet, I knew I couldn't withstand the hunger much longer, so I freshened up in the bathroom, pulled on a new pair of leggings and grabbed my bag to head out. Luckily, this apartment was walking distance from a few local businesses like the supermarket. So, I headed there.

It felt safe as I walked – not like you'd suddenly be attacked by someone. This neighborhood was safe, I knew that, and that gave me comfort.

I walked into the local supermarket, grabbed a cart and got to shopping. I grabbed just a few things I'd need, deciding that I'd do the big shopping with my next paycheck.

I had just a single grocery bag in my hand when I was done and then I went to a café, which was right beside the apartment.

I waited in line, staring at the menu board and deciding what to buy. There wasn't much variety, seeing it was a coffee shop, but I wasn't looking for anything much either way.

I was waiting for a ham sandwich when I felt a presence beside me. I didn't want to look right away, but his scent was intoxicating in a way that had to grab your attention.

I turned to look, my heart skipping a beat when I saw the guy standing next to me. He was tall– so tall I had to crane my head up to look up at him – and had arms the size of my legs. It was just his side profile, but I could tell he was a handsome guy from his sharp jawline, and his snub nose.

Just as I was about to look away, he turned to me and met my gaze. He had deep set green eyes and thick, bushy brows, making him look very enigmatic. His low beard didn't distract from his chiseled features and full lips. I swallowed, feeling the tension in my body as I stared at him. I didn't want to seem rude by staring so blatantly, but I couldn't look away as easily. There was just something about him that

drew me to him. Yes, he was handsome, but I'd seen a lot of handsome men in my lifetime. But, there was just this raw pull of chemistry I'd never before felt with a stranger. He seemed very untamed, unkempt, rough and kind of a beastlike of a man, belonging to the wild, not the city.

"Paige?" My head snapped towards the counter when I heard my name. The server smiled at me, her hand outstretched with a small paper bag and a drink, which had my name scribbled across it.

I smiled as I took it. "Thank you."

Before I left, I gave the burly, giant man one final glance and realized he hadn't taken his eyes off me. I swallowed the lump in my throat as I left the café, feeling hot and ready for a swim.

If I'd still been in college, I'd go right up to that stud and let him know I was interested. I was never shy in letting men know how I felt or even going after what I wanted. I was bold in college – ready to take life by the balls, and I didn't give a damn. There was no regret, but at twenty-six, I felt like I needed to be a bit more responsible with my thinking. I couldn't have one-night stands as often, and I couldn't party at every single club I knew.

I was in a different era of life, and if I wanted the family and a good husband, I'd have to play it a bit more safely. I'd been celibate for almost a year; I couldn't ruin that with someone who had 'fuck boy' written all over his face.

It couldn't hurt, though, I thought as I walked to my apartment. I was in a new apartment, in a new town and that was something to celebrate. Adding one person to the mix couldn't be such a bad thing, could it?

I sighed when I got to my apartment and closed the door behind me. My phone rang, and I immediately pattered to the counter to put the things down before I started to rummage through my bag.

I smiled when I realized it was my best friend who I'd known since high school. We'd gone to different colleges, but we'd remained friends throughout. It was a pity she was still stuck in our small town back in Virginia.

"Molly, what's up girl?" I answered.

"Same old, you know how it is. How's Chicago?"

"Better now that I'm in a new place. It's perfect."

"Damn right it is. I saw the pictures you sent me. It's a dream, isn't it?"

"Definitely is," I said as I grabbed my food and padded over to

the sofa.

Molly laughed. “I’m proud of you; you’ve come a far way.”

“Thanks, Love. You should visit someday. Take a break from the town.”

“I should but the salon’s getting busy, and Mom needs the help.”

“Alright, well whenever you’re ready.”

“Sure thing. Everyone in town is talking about you, y’know. A lot of us knew you’d be the one to leave this town first – be a big city girl.”

I scoffed. “I’m not a big city girl.”

“But look at you – you have your own apartment in the city, you have a nice job – all that’s missing is the billionaire we always joked about as kids.”

I giggled at that. “I doubt there’s any billionaire in these parts, but I’ll keep my eyes open.”

Molly laughed. “So, you haven’t found anyone nice as yet.”

My thoughts instantly went back to the beast at the café, but I shook my head. “Nah, I haven’t really gotten the time to do much but work anyway.”

“Well, I’m pretty sure finding a man won’t be hard for you. You’re a bombshell.”

I smiled. “We’ll see about that.”

Chapter 2

Paige

After chatting with Molly, I decided that taking a swim would probably be the best thing before I went to bed. Swimming was my favorite past time and it always helped me to get rejuvenated for the following day. My last apartment didn't have a swimming pool, which was sometimes depressing, but I had deliberately made sure that when I moved, the place I chose would have one.

I was excited to give it a try – to further celebrate my moving here. I got dressed in one of my two-piece swimwears and headed down. It was some minutes to ten and already dark outside. I didn't expect anyone to be there so late, and I was glad that was the case. The area was empty.

I placed my things on a chair before I jumped in. To my surprise, the water was warmer than I expected, and I figured it must've been heated. I took a few laps back and forth before I came up for air, wiping water from my face and smiling hard.

In the corner of my eye, I saw a figure approaching but didn't give it much thought. I waded around in the water, realizing the person was actually moving towards the pool. I blinked a couple of times, squinting the water from my eyes and trying to make out who it was.

With the light mostly casting from behind, only a silhouette was visible, but I could clearly see it was a guy. A tall one with muscular arms and legs. He was only in shorts, a towel slung over his shoulders, his hair slightly messy.

I swallowed as I slowed, moving to settle in a corner.

"Good night," he said as he went to the other end.

"Good night," I said, managing a polite smile and doing a double take when he entered the pool.

I had a clear view of his face now, and my pulse quickened when I realized who he was. He was the guy from the coffee shop who'd been standing beside me with a perfume I couldn't get out of my brain if I wanted to. The big, burly giant.

He looked at me, too, and I saw when his brows furrowed in confusion. "Paige?"

My eyes widened. “You know my name?” I asked, surprised that he did.

“You were in the coffee shop earlier, weren’t you?”

I cleared my throat. “Yeah, but...”

“The server said your name,” he pointed out, and my mouth hung open.

“Oohhh, yeah… that’s right,” I said, feeling a blush warm my cheeks. “Now, it’s only fair that I know yours.”

“Declan,” he said, still keeping his distance, yet his eyes were still trained on me.

“Nice meeting you again, Declan.”

“Pleasure meeting you.”

I chewed on my lips. “You live here?”

“Yeah, for a while now. I’ve never seen you here before – you’re new?”

I smiled. “Yeah, moved in today actually.”

“Ah, so we’re neighbors then,” he smiled, exposing a straight line of white teeth.

“Yeah,” I chuckled softly, watching his chest as the water caressed every inch.

I didn’t know what was wrong with me – maybe it was the fact that I hadn’t seen a half-naked man in person in more than a year, but I could feel myself getting wet for him despite being in the water. The fact that he was the type I’d usually go for didn’t make things any easier. It was like Declan had appeared out of nowhere, ready to tempt me when I’d finally managed to get my priorities straight. My focus was on something bigger – not another meaningless romp in the sack.

“I always thought I’d been the only one down here every night. I learned quickly that not many people like night swims.”

“I like swimming at any time of the day, but I’m usually free at nights,” I said. “I hope you don’t mind me intruding.”

“Not at all. I welcome the company.”

I smiled as I took a dip, immersing myself under the water. I swam to the other end before I came up for air.

“Seems like you’re a pro,” he said.

“Far from it, but I can hold my own.”

He smiled, nodding his head. “Something tells me you’re not

from Chicago."

I paused. "What gave it away?"

He shrugged. "Just a hunch."

"You're right. I came here a couple of months ago to work. Are you from here?"

"You could say so. My family lives a few miles from here."

"That's great."

"You live here alone?"

I scoffed. "That kinda sounds like an intro to a horror film."

He chuckled, and I couldn't help smiling myself.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean for that to come off as creepy as it sounds. I only asked because I wanted to know if you're taken."

"I could be and still live alone," I pointed out, raising a brow at him and trying my best not to stare at him too much.

"You're right. So, are you?" He pressed, and I bit my lips.

"Why do you ask?"

"Just curious if there's a chance for me to impress you."

I grinned and waded off in the water. "How many girls do you pick up at this pool, Declan?"

"Not as many as you think. I've lived here for a year and have never made a move on anyone here."

I stopped and my gaze met his. "You expect me to believe that?"

"Your choice, but I'm telling the truth."

"What makes me so special?"

"You want to know the truth?"

"Only that."

"To be honest, it wasn't even this interaction. It was the one at the coffee shop. There was something, and I know you felt it, too."

I swallowed. "How can you be sure?"

"I saw the look in your eyes."

I swallowed the lump in my throat, unable to deny it. He was right; I never thought he'd felt the same.

"Ok, I'll give you that, but I'm not looking for a fling or anything like that," I said glancing over at him to see him frown.

"Who says I am?"

I scoffed. “Unfortunately, I know your type. I have dealt with a few in the past.”

His thick brow perked up. “And what’s ‘my type?’” He asked, moving closer to me.

I shrugged. “Not looking for anything serious. Just looking to have a good time.”

He paused at that, and I could tell he was guilty.

“Am I wrong?”

His Adam’s apple bobbed. “Is that a bad thing?”

“It’s not; I’m just looking for something more stable at the moment.”

He stopped in front of me, casting a shadow over me. “Stable sounds boring.”

I scoffed. “To a player, it does,” I shot back.

“Come on, Paige. I could fuck you right here right now, and you could go back to ‘stable’ by tomorrow.”

My heart raced. It did sound tempting, but since Declan was being a tease, so could I.

“You really think you’d be satisfied with doing me once?” I asked, looking into his darkening eyes.

“Now, when you say stuff like that, I’m even more eager to change your mind.”

“See, I don’t think you can,” I said as I attempted to turn and leave. He held my hand, and I almost gasped from the sudden contact.

I turned to him, my heart beating fast and stared into his brown eyes.

“We’ll see about that.”

Chapter 3

Paige

I sighed once I reached my apartment, leaning against the door and trying to tame my beating heart. I was still hot from the encounter with Declan, my body rebelling against everything I stood for.

I couldn't be tempted in that way; I'd already made up my mind that the next man I'd be with would be someone who wasn't just looking for a one-night stand. Declan didn't deny his motives. It was obvious what he wanted. The worst part, he had the charm and the rough manly looks to make me go against everything I believed in.

I'd spent almost a year celibate; I couldn't fall into his trap.

I went to take a quick shower and flopped down in bed, thinking back on our interaction at the pool. Images of his body were still stuck in my head – his carved pecs, defined abs and huge muscular arm. He looked like he lifted weights for a living, and had that masculine ruggedness that always did something to me. I could still feel his touch on my wrist, the strength exuding from him. I couldn't help but think about what it would feel like to have those powerful hands running down my body, touching me in the most intimate places.

As the thought came to me, I felt a tingling between my legs that continued to spread throughout my body. I bit down on my lips, fighting the urge to touch myself as arousal glided through me.

"Fuck," I whispered, not wanting to think about it, but how could I not when he was the only thing my brain allowed me to think about?

I'd felt the attraction in the coffee shop – it had only become more intense at the pool. My body knew I wanted this man no matter how much my brain contested against it. It had been a year – damn! A year of not feeling a man's touch. This one was bold enough to tell me what he wanted – how could I resist him when I wanted the same thing?

With a heavy sigh, I reached across and turned the lights off on my nightstand. I stared into the darkness while my body still hummed from my arousal.

I closed my eyes, willing myself to sleep.

**

Declan had plagued my thoughts for the entire night and continued to do so even after I got up and got ready for work. I just couldn't shake the fact that he was in this building right now, going about his business while I was here, trying to rid him from my mind. I bet he'd probably even forgotten who I was – and onto the next woman he saw. Men like Declan only pursued women they were within reach of – he wouldn't make the effort to go out of his way to pursue a woman. I just knew it. He was a player; ladies fawned over him. It wasn't the opposite.

I shook my head and grabbed my bag, deciding to head out. I pulled the door open and was about to step into the hallway when I saw a man going down the hall to the elevator. My brows furrowed as I watch him walk, noticing the thick mass of black hair on his head and his toned arms swinging at the side.

My heart skipped a beat, and I immediately stepped back inside when I realized it was Declan.

"We lived on the same floor?" I asked myself, my eyes searching the floor for answers I knew weren't there.

It couldn't be. What were the odds that he lived next door to me? I didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

Pulling in a deep breath, I waited a minute and stepped outside when I was sure he was gone. The ride down on the elevator left me feeling more anxious. I didn't want to step out of the elevator and bump into him on another floor.

When that didn't happen, I felt a pang of relief. The more I avoided Declan, the better it was for me.

**

I tried my best to focus at work like I usually was. But today was especially hard since Declan had aroused something inside me that wasn't so easy to ignore.

"Hey, Ms. Pearson?"

I looked up from my desk to the man standing at the front with a stack of papers in hand. He was dressed formally in a button-down tucked in crisp black pants. His brown hair was neatly slicked back, his glasses resting on his narrow nose.

"Paige, please."

His face reddened. “Paige, the boss wanted you to look over these – make sure everything is balanced.”

I frowned as I looked down at the stack of paper. “Doesn’t he have digital copies?”

“He does, but he always likes to keep hard copies as well. He’s a bit old-school.”

“Oh,” I said, stretching out my hand to take them from him.

When he stood there after, I looked up at him, wondering what else was there.

“Is that all?” I asked, offering a polite smile.

His distinct Adam’s apple bounced. “Er – I’m Ryan by the way.”

I smiled. “I know that, Ryan. We see each other every day,” I reminded him.

He pushed up the thick-rimmed glasses on his face and smiled. “Yeah, you’re right. I just didn’t think you’d remember.”

“Of course, I do.”

He rubbed his arm. “So, I was thinking we could maybe go out for lunch sometime. We usually take lunch at the same time,” he pointed out.

I stared at him, knowing by the way he blushed that it wouldn’t be a cordial lunch date. But I also didn’t want to seem rude and dismiss him right away. Ryan had always been nice to me, but the problem was, now I knew it was probably because he had this planned all along.

I smiled nonetheless. “Sounds great.”

His green eyes widened. “R– really?”

“Yeah.”

He looked flustered. “Er– how about today?”

I froze up a little but then nodded. “Yeah, sure.”

He seemed confused about what to do next and gave an awkward wave, a stiff smile, before he turned, almost bumping into furniture. I grinned as I watched him leave, thinking it was cute how shy he’d gotten in my presence.

**

It was probably a bad idea, but I didn’t see any harm in it. We were just two colleagues having lunch with each other. I had no

intention of leading on Ryan to make him think otherwise.

He decided on a small diner in town that supposedly had some great burgers according to him. I was a fan of all food, so I was willing to give it a try.

Once we were served, I took my first bite, while Ryan waited for my approval.

I nodded, not because I wanted to reassure him, but because he was right, it was good food.

He grinned at that, displaying white teeth.

“It’s really good,” I muttered out.

“Told you. This has been my favorite place since I was a teenager,” he said.

“I’m glad you put me on to it,” I said.

“Don’t mention it.”

Ryan and I continued with basic conversation that he mostly led. He was a good person, but I knew he’d want more out of this, and I couldn’t give him that. Ryan wasn’t my type – I wasn’t attracted to him in any way and didn’t want the lines crossed where that was concerned. I was sure he’d make some girl happy someday, but I was positive it wouldn’t be me.

The door to the diner creaked open, and my gaze drifted in the direction. Three men came through dressed in construction gear – steel-toed boots, safety vests and hard hats tucked under their arms. One towered above the rest, his footsteps heavy as he walked. They went straight up to the cashier, and the first one made the order. My brows furrowed as I heard the voice and immediately placed it to the person standing there.

I hadn’t noticed, but it was Declan. He was standing right there. Big and towering.

I sunk a little in my chair and turned my body slightly to the window.

“Everything okay?” Ryan asked and I cleared my throat. For a second, I'd forgotten that I was in his company.

“Yeah, everything’s fine,” I lied.

His smile told me he didn’t suspect anything. “You’re easily one of the prettiest women I’d ever seen,” he said, and I stiffened.

“Thanks.”

“I don’t mean to pass my place, but I just thought it’s something I should let you know.”

“I appreciate it.”

“You have the prettiest brown eyes – when the sun hits it, it’s like pools of honey.”

For the first time, I found myself blushing over something Ryan had said. He was sweet – a gentlemen – and truth was, he should be the type I should be going for – not the ones who looked like they could be on the cover of Playboy.

Yet here I was, knowing that couldn’t happen. I was only attracted to who I considered my type – and he was at the cashier making an order while I sat here with a man who gave me nothing but compliments. It was crazy to think about; my body wanted one thing, and my mind wanted another. At this point, there was no way of getting both.

I glanced towards the cashier again, almost gasping when I made eye contact with Declan. He raised a brow as he looked at Ryan, a smug look on his face that left me a little confused.

I swiveled my head back to Ryan, giving him my full attention while I tried my best not to think about Declan.

Chapter 4

Declan

Paige. She was still fresh in my mind after last night, and after our conversation, I knew it'd be for a long time – until I had her at least.

Girls like Paige loved the chase, and they knew about the game. She couldn't be easily swayed, but I was up for the challenge, especially since I was finding it so hard to get her out my head. I'd wanted her since the very moment I saw her at that coffee shop staring at me. She probably didn't realize it then, but I noticed the way her cheeks reddened when I caught her staring – how her eyes roamed every inch of me. That was enough to know she wanted me, too.

I thought I'd never see her again but hoped we'd meet at the coffee shop another time, and then I'd probably make a move.

I didn't expect to find her in the apartment pool, looking more delicious than when I'd seen her the first time. I'd found it hard to believe, feeling like I'd been trapped in some virtual reality that wasn't close to being real. But there she was in the water, like a goddess, her long, black hair flowing down her body, and her brown eyes appearing even darker in the night.

My body had reacted instantly and to stop myself from sporting a boner in front of a complete stranger, I'd sunk myself in the pool to hide myself.

The image of her glowing skin was still bright in my memory, beads of water trickling down her body – over her full, round breasts. Seeing her walk away was bittersweet but probably my favorite part. Water dripped from her body as she'd stepped out of the pool, sluicing down between her slender legs. I'd instantly thought of a different kind of liquid I wanted to see trickle down those killer legs.

She was perfection, sporting a tiny waist that flowed into curvy hips. Her ass was round, her thong stuck between each firm cheek. It was hard to think of something off the top of my head that could top that sight.

"So, who's the girl you were staring at? An ex or something?" My friend Greg asked as we left the diner.

"Nah, we live in the same apartment. We only met a day ago," I explained while pulling the burger from the wrapper.

“But you want to smash her, don’t you?” He said, grinning from ear to ear.

I cringed at the choice of word but decided to indulge him. “It’s that obvious, huh?”

“Only if you’re paying attention… which apparently I was!” He laughed.

I took a bite as we walked up the street to the construction site.

“For a second, it looked like you wanted to murder the nerd she was with,” Dave put in.

“He’s not her type,” I muttered.

“How do you know? Some hot girls like her prefer the nerds for some reason. It’s a thing,” Dave said

I gritted my teeth as I turned to him. “He’s not!” I exclaimed.

Dave’s eyes widened as he took a step back, surprised at my outburst.

I shook my head. “He’s not.”

“Well, if that’s true, then what’s stopping you from hooking up with her? You’ve never had any problems in the past,” Greg said.

I swallowed, suddenly losing my appetite for the burger. “She wants stable.”

They both scoffed. “Stable?”

“I don’t do stable. There are too many women in this world to just stick with one,” I said.

Dave shrugged. “I don’t know, man; when you find the one, all that thinking ends.”

I snorted. “You really believe in that bullshit?”

“I’ve been married for ten years, so yeah.”

I shook my head before Greg intervened. “I still can’t believe you got married so quickly after college. We were beasts after high school,” he pointed out.

I smiled at that, wishing I’d known them then.

“There’s a certain peace to being with one woman. It’s like nothing else matters when you’re with her. One day, you two will get to experience that feeling,” Dave said.

Greg shook his head. “Anyway, I say you find a way to charm her and fuck her until she’s ‘unstable,’” he said, laughing at his own joke. I couldn’t help but chuckle.

I shook my head as I gave it more thought. “I don’t know; she looks younger than what I’d usually go for too,” I pointed out.

Greg scoffed. “As long as she’s over twenty-one, I don’t see the problem.”

We continued to chat, but my mind would occasionally drift back to Paige and that guy I saw her with at the Diner. He was definitely not her type, and it was written boldly across her face. Even the blind could’ve seen it. As I stood there thinking about it, I wasn’t sure if I was trying to convince myself.

**

I got home, took a shower and grabbed a beer from the fridge. After, I plopped down on my couch and watched the recap of the football game I’d missed on the weekend.

I looked around the empty apartment as I sat there, thinking back to what Dave had said. I’d never believed in ‘the one’ bullshit that always seemed to plague mainstream media. I didn’t believe there was a single person who existed for another person that could make them take a whole different perspective on life. The fairy tales, the movies, always ended at the good part, and that was just the reality of it.

But for the first time in my entire life, I began to question whether or not I was happy. Yes, I had a job I loved, friends by my side and the freedom to do whatever I wanted, yet it was evenings like these that made me question it all. It always felt like something was missing. Now I didn’t know if that was a woman or a family, but I was yet to find out. Maybe I wouldn’t, and maybe it was something else altogether.

At around ten, I slipped into trunks and went down to the pool, my intentions solely on seeing Paige again. I loved a good swim after work, but it was Paige who motivated me today.

I had to see her again, even though I knew I shouldn’t. She was attractive and every inch of my body called for her, but I usually dated women who were no less than five years younger than me. I was nearing forty and Paige looked like she had a couple years before thirty. I didn’t like that part.

Chapter 5

Paige

I mulled over going by the pool all evening ever since I came back from work. I just knew Declan would be there and since I was still determined to avoid him, it probably wasn't the smartest idea.

And yet, I found myself compelled to do so. I knew I was making a mistake and yet I couldn't stop myself. I changed into my swimwear, pulled my hair out and boarded the elevator.

On my way down, I knew I should stop and head back up, but a huge part of me wanted this, and I couldn't deny it. I wanted to see him again, I wanted the conversation, and after today, I craved it.

Ryan was sweet, he was safe, but he didn't spark the desire inside me that made my heart flutter and my panties wet. I wanted someone to match my fire, someone who was on the same wavelength as me, and Ryan just wasn't it.

With my towel clutched to my stomach, I walked towards the pool, my heart beating faster the closer I went. My heart plummeted when I saw Declan inside, taking laps from end to end. I stopped; stood there completely frozen as I watched, having half a mind to run back to my apartment. This was dangerous. I was playing a dangerous game, but the thrill it gave me was indescribable.

I swallowed the lump in my throat and pattered towards him, placing my belongings on a chair. He stopped swimming to look up at me, a smile blooming on his handsome face. My pulse quickened as I stared down at him, water trickling from his body.

"For a second, I thought you wouldn't come," he smugly said.

"Please don't think I'm here because of you," I fired at him.

He smiled. "Oh, don't worry, I assumed you just couldn't stay away."

I rolled my eyes as I dipped my feet into the water and went in. Declan watched my every movement, his eyes roaming unabashedly over me.

"Don't flatter yourself."

He cleared his throat, but his voice sounded as if it was still filled with jealousy as he asked, "So, you're into nerdy-guys?"

I paused, frowning. "You don't know anything about me to

know what I'm into," I jabbed.

He moved towards me. "I know that guy couldn't please you even if he tried his hardest."

My heart lurched, but I maintained my composure. "And you would?"

"You know I would," he said.

I shrugged, trying my best not to stare at his lips. "Actually, I don't. Guys with a big ego always tend to have a little pecker."

"I guess you'll have to see for yourself if you're brave enough," he said, and I swallowed as he came closer to me.

He was right at my face, his minty breath fanning lightly across my face – warm and inviting.

A drop of water trickled down his lips, and I watched as it trailed all the way to his beard before dripping against his chest. I knew I was staring, but I couldn't stop myself. My heart was beating rapidly, and warmth started to spread throughout my whole body. He inched closer, and the water crashed between our bodies.

Declan placed his hand on the edge of the pool, his arm grazing mine. I sucked in a breath, wanting desperately to taste his lips, though I knew it wasn't the wise choice.

I wanted stable, but what was wrong in breaking the rules once, right?

I crashed my lips against his, my eyes instantly closing as soon as his soft lips glided against mine. My hands went to wrap around his neck, holding him in place while he circled his around the small of my waist. I deepened the kiss as he tugged me closer, the feel of his touch further igniting the passion inside me. His lips were so soft, contrasting with the faint roughness of his beard grazing my skin. He tasted like mint and smelled like cool morning air. His tongue was skillful, guiding my every movement as he held me close, my body burning against his, the tingling reappearing between my legs.

It made me want him more – it made the heat pooling in my stomach too much to bear. I suddenly reminded myself that I hadn't felt a man touch me like this in months. I hadn't kissed anyone like this in what felt like forever.

His fingers traced my skin, and my body jolted, taking me by surprise. I broke the kiss, feeling heat rise to my cheeks as I tried to hide my embarrassment. Declan's dark gaze met mine, his warm breath mingling with mine.

When he tore his lips from mine, I almost gasped. He wiped his

mouth and shook his head, his face slightly flustered as he looked at me.

"What is it?" I asked, my voice shaky from my pounding heart.

"How old are you?" he asked, his gaze moving from my eyes to my lips.

I frowned at his question, wondering why it had to come up now. "Twenty-six." I was quick to say, desperate to have his mouth on mine again. I was burning up.

His jaw visibly clenched, his throat bobbing. "Damn."

I frowned. "What? All of a sudden, I'm no longer your type?"

"I'm twelve years older than you," he pointed out.

I swallowed at that revelation. Sure, I knew he was in his thirties, I just never thought he was that far in. Either way, it wouldn't have been a problem for me, but I realized, for Declan, it might be.

The look on his face told me he was about to withdraw – probably leave me here high and dry, but despite this hurdle, my body was still burning up and I wanted Declan to give me what I desperately wanted.

"We're just having fun. It's not like we plan on being serious," I pointed out. I knew I sounded desperate, but that's how I felt. After awakening my desire, there was no way Declan was about to leave me with nothing. Despite my earlier reservations, I was too far gone now to turn back now. I wanted him.

I swallowed the nervousness in my throat as I inched closer towards him. "Touch me," I whispered, reaching for his hand. When he didn't resist, I placed it against my hips and almost gasped when his touch ignited sparks all over my skin.

We were in water, but that didn't stop my body from heating up. Plus, this was a heated pool, so truth was, I was scorched.

He slid his hand between us, shifting a little to the side so he had a better angle. When I felt his hand at the waistband of my panties, my breath became more erratic. I held his gaze while he slipped his hand below my panties and onto my intimate area, caressing it. My chest rose and fell with heavy breaths as his fingers slid over my mound and between my slit in the most pleasing and arousing way. My lips parted, inches away from his as he drove a single finger in, pressing gently against my clit.

I leaned into him, begging for his kiss again while he rubbed against my clit. When he lowered his head to mine, I caught his mouth in an urgent kiss, sucking fervently on his lips, pulling on his

tongue. When I withdrew for the second time, it was only to catch my breath, to get a grip on myself. I would have stayed kissing him for eternity if it didn't feel like my heart was about to explode in my chest.

"I don't want to stay inside the pool," I said, still breathing heavily.

He smiled, his eyes dark. "Your place or mine?"

I didn't know if I could make it that far. Truth was, I wanted him now. I didn't want to go all the way up to my apartment and have thinking time to change my mind. I wanted him right now as every inch of my body yearned for him.

I glanced at the lounge chairs sitting at the side and then looked at him. There was a twinkle in his eyes, and I knew he got the hint.

He pulled his hand away from me and guided the way out of the pool. I watched his broad back, water drenching down his flawless skin and knew I was too weak to resist him.

When he stood outside the pool and turned to me, I realized he was hard, his erection making a huge tent in his pants. My pulse quickened as I moved closer towards his, cupping his face in my hands before kissing him again. I intentionally pressed my body against his, feeling how his hardness molded against my tummy and wanting it inside my gut instead.

His hand circled my back; I gasped when he pulled at the string of my bra and released it from the knot. The weight of my full breast dipped a little as he pulled it from its bind. He dragged it from between me, my breasts now exposed to him.

He sat on the lounge chair and looked up from me, enough light surrounding us for me to see the lust in his eyes. He stared at my breasts and then he ran his hand up my sides, cupping them both in his hands. I gasped at his warm touch, the feeling spreading throughout my body. He caressed them in his hands, and I moaned, deciding to take it a step further.

I straddled his legs and sat on his lap. He moaned when my crotch grazed his hardness, and I intentionally sunk myself a bit further down, rubbing myself on him.

"Gosh, you're killing me, Paige," he said as he kissed my mouth, dragging his lips down my neck. I arched my back, causing my breast to jut out and allowing him to taste them as well. When his warm mouth covered a nipple, I moaned, my eyes fluttering close as he sucked on them, moving from one to the other. I continued to grind my hips against his, feeling myself get even wetter against his boner.

The faster I moved against him, the harder he sucked on my nipples, alternating between licking, sucking and teasing my nipples with the tip of his tongue.

I clung to him, trapping his face between my boobs as he sucked on me. I threw my head back, moaning loudly as I gave into every bit of passion.

“I want you… now,” I said, my voice trembling.

Declan tore his lips away from my aching tits and flipped me on my back before I could even fathom what was happening. I gasped as I stared at him, my back pressed against the lounge chair with my chest heaving.

He ogled my half naked body, the look in his eyes every bit of primal as he stared at me.

“I want to memorize every inch of you, right here, right now,” he said.

“I want to feel you deep inside me,” I said, reaching for him.

I spread my legs, and he came between them, settling comfortably before reaching for my panties. I held my breath when he hooked his fingers at the waist and pulled them down my legs.

My legs were closed together when he threw them to the side. I wasn’t usually shy, but today I was feeling a bit of that with Declan. He closed my knees that were pressed together and then he gently pried them apart with his large hands. His breath quickened as his gaze lowered to my pussy nestled between my legs. He swallowed visibly, and my heart hammered.

He stood to quickly pull his trunks off, and I lay there, breathing erratically while where I was slowly dawned on me. I was at our apartment, in the open, ready to have sex with Declan. Every bit of it was crazy, but that didn’t stop me from wanting him. The adrenaline rushing through my body was so intense I knew I’d come as soon as he entered me. I was tingling all over – my body on high alert for him.

My eyes widened a little when his erection sprung free, as hard as a rock, both long and thick with a swollen, rounded head, flushed and pulsing with need.

Declan came even closer, pulling another chair close and joining it with the one I was on. When his attention was back to me, he dipped his head and licked my breasts for the second time, twirling his tongue around it while his erection grazed against my legs.

I moaned softly, my hands trailing down his broad back.

He lifted his head and stared into my eyes; for a second, they looked panicked.

"I don't have a condom with me," he said, and my heart lurched. Somehow, in the heat of passion, I'd forgotten that one important fact.

I swallowed hard, knowing that if he left to get one, I'd probably chicken out.

"I'm clean," he said. "You don't have to worry about that."

His words gave me little reassurance. I didn't know Declan well enough to take his word for it, but that was exactly what I was about to do.

"I am, too. I'd never been with a man raw before," I confessed as my heart pounded. It was the truth; I'd always used a condom, but somehow today, I felt like throwing caution to the wind.

He kissed me hard, his tongue caressing mine as he kissed me. I moaned, clinging onto him while his wet tip grazed against my sensitive entrance. I raised my hips to meet him, slowly impaling myself as the smooth head slid into me. I broke the kiss, my mouth gasping open as his engorged head parted my aroused flesh. With a grunt, Declan plunged into me, and I screamed as my walls clasped tightly around him.

He was big, stretching me completely as I hugged him tightly. I stared up into the dark skies, with stars floating around my head. The feeling was incredible – being filled like this, our bodies touching, skin to skin, flesh to flesh. There was nothing between us, it was just his naked skin against mine, and he was warm and huge and pulsing inside me, stretching me to the max as he lunged to the hilt.

Declan moaned throatily, pulling back, almost sliding out completely, before he slammed into me again. I squealed again, my nails digging into the skin of his back, my body trembling as pleasure soared through me. My walls clenched and unclenched around him; my body slightly trembling as I writhed under his cock. It took me only a second to orgasm, but that didn't come as a surprise to me. I'd already predicted it. I'd been so deprived that I could have come even from a touch.

Declan looked down on me, his eyes wide with shock. My cheeks heated, and I swallowed the lump in my throat.

"It's been a while," I said shakily.

He smiled and said nothing. Only dipped his head to kiss along my neck, his cock still lodged deep inside me. I closed my eyes, my body still sensitive and highly responsive.

After a minute, he started to thrust again into my wetness. I thrashed my head from side to side, biting my lips as I tried to prevent another premature orgasm. I tried to distract myself for a second, turning my head in the direction of the apartment and immediately saw when a light was turned on in one of the rooms.

My heart hammered when someone came by their window. I doubt they could see us, but when they inched a bit closer, their head turned in our direction, I knew it was a possibility.

My fingers trailed down Declan's back and over his taut ass as he fucked me. I was noisy as he filled me harder, going deeper each time.

"You feel so good inside me," I said. "Please don't stop."

"Trust me, I won't. I'm slowly losing my mind each time your tight pussy tugs on me," he said.

He paused, easing up a little so he was resting on his knees. He parted my legs, staring down between us just before he started to thrust inside me again.

I gasped, glancing over at the figure again and realizing he hadn't moved.

"I think… I think someone's watching us," I said.

Declan briefly turned his head to follow my gaze but didn't seem to mind it much. He only smiled, staring down at me.

"Then let's give them a show," he said before he started thrusting inside me even faster.

"Touch yourself," he instructed. Without a bit of hesitance, my hands went to my clit, slightly grazing Declan's cock plunging into me. I began to rub on my clit, closing my eyes as the sensations rose tenfold inside me. Declan muttered a curse and covered my breast with one hand as he continued to pummel inside me.

I gasped, feeling the sensations heightened, Declan's grip tightening on my breast. More of my wetness pooled for him, my body rising to a dangerous high as he fucked me.

I rubbed my clit faster, biting down on my lips as the sensations continued to rise.

"Fuckkkk!" I shouted, my legs threatening to close up. He quickly pried them apart, slamming into me before he grunted loudly.

I was on my second orgasm, moaning out of control while my body trembled, my walls gripping him tight.

Declan quickly pulled out from me, tugging on his cock in his

hand twice before a spurt of his cum landed with a warm splatter on my stomach. His moans were loud and guttural as he came, his hips bucking, every muscle in his body drawn stiff and tensed as his visibly throbbing cock spewed long stream after stream of cum.

I closed my eyes, breathing heavily to catch my breath. Declan's seed trailed down my body, tickling my skin, increasing the pleasure that consumed me.

"Fuck," he said, slipping over to sit up. He raked his hand through his wet hair, still breathing heavily while his cock became flaccid in his hand.

"That was incredible," he said. I couldn't speak as yet. I was still trying to catch my breath – to slow my galloping heart.

When I finally managed to do so, I eased up from the chair, reaching for my towel which was thrown over a chair. I wrapped it around my flustered body, holding it tightly against me.

"I needed that; thank you." I got up to grab my things.

"You're leaving already?" He asked, and I frowned.

"Well, yes."

"Come on, chill with me for a bit," he said as he wrapped his towel around his hips as well.

"That's a bad idea," I mumbled, reaching for my keys.

"How so? Already feeling that sting of regret, Paige?"

I paused at that, giving his words thought. I didn't feel any regret and doubted I would because I'd been so fulfilled, but I already knew this was not going to happen again.

"I've gotta go," I said as I hastily slipped into my sandals and walked towards the apartment building, water still dripping from my body along with Declan's cum.

I clutched my towel even tighter, desperate to take a shower and get into dry clothes. When I stepped inside the elevator, my heart lurched when a hand extended to stop it from closing. Declan stood there, waiting a moment before he stepped inside beside me.

I took a step back, creating some distance between us – which he noticed.

"I've gotta admit, Paige, I didn't expect the regret to creep in so quickly."

My lips parted to reply, but instead, I was silent for a second, saying nothing. I already knew Declan was a tease, and I didn't intend to fall for it.

He moved towards me, raising one hand to the wall, trapping me between him. I could smell myself on him, smell how he reeked of sex.

"Tell me, do you think glasses could have made you come like I did?"

I met his gaze then, realizing he was talking about Ryan. The smugness was on his face, and God, I just wanted to claw it off with my bare hands.

"Maybe, people surprise you," I shot back, taking satisfaction in the way the smile fell from his face.

He gritted his teeth, his gaze darkening, and I started to regret my rebuttal.

"Look me in the eye and tell me you didn't love having me inside you," he said, his voice low, his breath mingling with mine.

I swallowed hard, wishing I could take a step back, but I couldn't. I had to remain where I was, constantly reminding myself that this man had the ability to make me lose my mind in pleasure. My body still tingled from having him inside me, faint memories of his tongue still vivid on my skin.

I looked him in the eye, but I couldn't lie to him, as much as I wanted to see the smugness gone – knock him back to ground zero. I couldn't look him in the eye and tell him I regretted or hated it. That would be a sin from the pits of hell.

"This can't happen again," I decided to say instead, and he eased up a little.

"Why not? Because I can't give you the stability you crave?"

I swallowed. "Yes," I confessed. "I needed you tonight, and I had you. That's as far as it gets, we both had a good time. Plus, the age-gap is a problem for you and that's totally fine. This won't be a thing."

He slowly nodded, but I could see he wasn't thoroughly convinced or wasn't taking me as seriously. "How sure are you about that?"

My heart thumped in my chest when I realized I didn't even know the answer to that, and Declan was taking great satisfaction in my silence. When the elevator dinged, I almost breathed a sigh of relief. I slipped from in front of him and scampered to my door.

Declan came out too, and I could see the surprise on his face as he glanced at my door.

"Hmm, quite the coincidence," he said as he moved behind me.

I expected him to stay, to further tease me, but he walked up the hall, stopping by his door.

He flashed me a smirk, and I almost gasped when I pushed my door open and stepped inside.

He was right next door.

Chapter 6

Paige

I spent almost an hour under the shower, allowing the warm water to rain against my skin, washing me of Declan's scent – the comingled smell of our sex, which had been distinct on my body. Not that it was a bad thing, but I couldn't torture myself by allowing myself to love the smell of him on me. As unsure I was that I could live up to my single rule, I knew I had to try.

If I allowed things to get further, I'd be addicted to him. It hadn't even been an hour since I had him inside me, and yet my body wanted him again.

But I knew I couldn't waste my time with him. I was at a point in my life where I wanted more, and that wasn't just good sex. It was just fun for Declan and after his comment about our age, I knew he'd never take me serious. He maybe thought or goals would be misaligned or we wouldn't be compatible in the long-run. Either way, I didn't care; it only made it easier to try and avoid him.

I sighed as I twisted the knob and turned the shower off. I stepped out, dried off and blow dried my hair before I went to bed. I turned all the lights off, intent on getting a quick and easy night's rest.

Fifteen minutes later, I found myself staring into complete darkness, not feeling like I needed any sleep. Declan still plagued my mind like an itch out of reach and impossible to ignore.

I tossed and turned in bed, feeling like my sanity slipped further away with each passing second. I flung the covers from around me, breathing heavily.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck!" I exclaimed, stifling my face with the pillow and screaming into it.

**

I woke up the following morning with heavy eyes, yawning every ten seconds, my need for sleep almost as great as my need for Declan. I got ready for work like a zombie would, feeling lifeless as I Uber-ed to work.

Staring at the computer screen while I worked felt like an

impossible task. The words began to blur as the need for sleep consumed every fiber in my body. Thinking it'd do no harm, I rested my head against my desk and closed my eyes, smiling at how good I already felt. It didn't take long for me to drift off into sleep, dreaming of things I shouldn't be dreaming about at work. What was happening to me?

**

"Paige?…Paige…" I heard my name being called, but it felt like it was in my head more than anything, so I continued to sleep. When I heard it again repeatedly, with more urgency, it dawned on me that the voice was Ryan's.

Ryan…

Right, I was at work!

I instantly bounded upright, looking around until I met Ryan's concerned gaze.

"Shit, I'm so sorry," I said, blowing the loose strands of hair from my face and straightening my shirt.

"Hey, it's no problem. It's just that it's lunchtime. You've been knocked out for a while."

I muttered a curse under my breath. "Gosh, did anyone notice?"

He smiled, shaking his head. "No one but me. I made sure you weren't disturbed – I figured you needed the rest."

I smiled. "Thank you."

He cleared his throat and tucked both hands into his pants side pockets. "So, you must be hungry. Ready for lunch?"

I cleared my throat, still feeling a bit frazzled as I searched for my bag.

"Sure."

**

Ryan and I went back to the Diner we'd gone to the day before. I liked the place, and they had variety, so I didn't mind going back frequently. We took a seat by the window like before and made our order. Ryan chose the burger this time again, and I opted for a classic club sandwich with a serving of fries.

He had this dreamy look in his eyes as he stared at me, and I

felt a pang in my heart, knowing I'd never feel the same way he felt about me.

"Ryan?" I began.

"Yeah…"

I pulled in a breath, trying to find a way to say what I was about to say without sounding like a complete asshole.

"Er… I'm only okay with us being just friends, okay? I don't want the lines crossed."

His cheeks became rosy, his gaze faltering to his plate. He managed a stiff smile and nodded, briefly looking up at me.

"I'm not dumb, Paige. I know my place, and I respect you. Truth is, I wouldn't know what to with a girl like you anyway," he laughed at that, and I joined in, happy that it lightened the mood for me at least.

"You're too kind."

He smiled and continued to eat. Like Déjà vu, three men entered the Diner dressed in construction gear as they walked up to the cashier. My pulse quickened when I saw Declan among them, leading the pack like the alpha male he was. He made his order and stepped to the side, leaning against the counter while his gaze did a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree survey of the café.

My heart lurched, waiting for us to make eye contact, and when we did, the feeling was otherworldly. My body was on full alert, tingling all over while a familiar sensation pulsed between my legs.

His eyes darkened as he stared at me, his throat bobbing. He tilted his head in the direction of the rest room, and my pulse raced even faster.

I bit the inside of my lip, glanced at Ryan who still devoured his food, and then I cleared my throat.

"Excuse me while I use the restroom," I said.

He looked up at me and smiled. "Of course."

I got up, quickly rushing to the door with the sign above it. Once inside, I sighed heavily before I began to pace the floor.

"What are you doing, Paige?" I asked myself as I paced back and forth.

What happened to avoiding Declan every chance I got? It wasn't as easy as it seemed. And by the looks of it, celibacy had turned me into a raging nymphomaniac.

Declan came through the door, closing it behind him. My heart

battered against my rib cage like a rabid dog wanting release. Seeing him again sparked all the emotions inside me. There was no denying I wanted him.

I strolled towards him, pressing my mouth to his in a hungry kiss that fueled my arousal even more. I searched for his belt buckle, my fingers fumbling as I tried to release it. Declan kissed me with just as much urgency, his tongue molding mine. This time, he smelled a bit sweaty, but there were still hints of that musky, sweet undertone that always made me heady.

Once I finally got his belt loose, I moved onto the button of his pants and pulled it open. The zipper went next and when my hand grazed his thick erection, I smiled against his mouth, happy he was ready for me.

We stumbled towards the bathroom's countertop sink and our kiss broke when he hoisted me up on top of it.

"I hate to admit it, but I missed you so much," I said, pulling at the hem of my shirt and shimmying it over my ass. Declan held onto my panties and pulled them to my ankles, staring deep into my eyes without blinking or saying a word, just raw desire.

I was burning up, consumed by a fire only he could temper. I cupped his face, wanting his kiss again, while he scooped me closer to him, pulling my naked ass closer to edge of the smooth, cold porcelain of the countertop.

He entered me in a single thrust, and I bit down on his lips. Declan groaned, thrusting deep inside me. He held me around my ass, pulling me on him as he sunk himself deeper and deeper. I whimpered softly, closing my eyes as my body rejoiced to have him yet again.

I clung to him, my hands wrapped around his neck, my face buried in his shoulder.

"Yes, yes, yes!" I shouted as he slammed into me, the sound of our bodies making contact loud as I clung to his length.

Declan tore me away from him, covering my mouth with his hand as he stared into my eyes and fucked me relentlessly. My core tightened as I stared into his lustful eyes as he continued to thrust deeply inside me.

He didn't let up, maintaining the same pace until he was grunting loudly. He removed his hand from my mouth, holding my hips yet again as he raged inside me. I arched my back, my head fell backward slightly, hitting the mirror behind me as I pushed my pelvis forward to meet his thrusts.

"I dreamt about fucking you again like this. I knew it wouldn't

be one and done."

Just then, he bucked inside me, and I bit my lips to stop my scream. My core started to convulse around him, gripping him tight. I lurched myself into him, pressing my face against his shoulders while I tried to muffle my cries. I bit his shoulder, my head reeling when the warmth of his cum filled my insides. My body jolted, small tremors shaking my body as he flooded me. A man had never come inside me before, and there was no feeling like it. I sat there, taking every drop, feeling my limbs go weak as I basked in my earth-shattering orgasm.

When Declan pulled out, he muttered a curse and took a step back, squeezing the tip of his softening length.

I slid to the floor, my knees buckling as I tried to steady myself. I was still shaking, my body still buzzing as I pulled up my panties, locking everything inside me.

Declan cupped my face, pressed his forehead against mine while our breaths mingled together.

"You're mine, Paige. I don't give a fuck about anything else. You're fucking mine."

I stood there staring at him, my body tingling from his words and what he'd just done to me. I watched, still trying to catch my breath as he cleaned himself up and stuffed his cock back into his pants.

He flashed me one last glance before he said, "I'll see you tonight." Then he was gone.

I mustered a sigh, leaning against the wall as I tried to get myself together. I freshened up a little before I stepped out into the dining area. Declan and his friends were gone, but Ryan still sat in his corner eating his food. Patiently waiting.

Shit.

Chapter 7

Paige

He promised tonight, and I was as eager as a puppy waiting for a treat. I didn't know if we'd meet at the pool like last time, but I showered regardless, piling my hair on the top of my head in a messy bun.

A knock came at the door, and I tightened the knot of my robe before I walked to the front door to see who it was. As I moved closer and closer, I realized that the only person who knew my apartment number was Declan. Molly knew where I lived, but she was all the way in Virginia and wouldn't know which door to knock on.

My pulse quickened, wondering if it was Declan. I wiped my sweaty hands against my robe and reached for the doorknob, wanting to see if I was right.

He stood on the other side, a smile on his face with a bouquet of red roses in hand. He was in black chinos and a white button-down shirt that he rolled to his elbows – a few buttons loose at the top.

He had a fresh cut, a low taper fade with soft curls around the middle. I couldn't help the smile that bloomed on my face as I took in the sight of him.

"What's the occasion?" I asked, leaning against the door frame with my arms crossed.

"I'm taking you out; get dressed," he said, handing me the flowers.

I took them, feeling a flurry of butterflies take off in my stomach. "What do you mean you're taking me out?" I asked, gawking at him when he stepped pass me to enter my apartment.

"Come on, don't tell me you've never gone out on a date before," he said.

I scoffed. "You think this is a date?" I asked raising a brow.

"As soon as you slip into something sexy, then it will be."

I crossed my arms again. "What makes you think I'd want to go out with you?"

"I'm a catch."

I laughed then, feeling it bubble from all the way in my

stomach. “Must be my lucky day,” I bit out sarcastically. I moved towards the kitchen and took the single vase I had stashed in the cupboard. I filled it with water and placed the roses inside before I turned to Declan.

He looked good. There was no denying that.

“What’s the catch for me?” I asked.

“You get to see I’m not the asshole you probably think I am.”

I shook my head. “I don’t think you’re an asshole?”

“Arrogant?”

I shrugged, raising a brow. “Maybe I’ll get to find out if dinner comes with a side of humility.”

He chuckled. “So, it’s a yes.”

“I guess so!” I called as I moved towards my bedroom. “Don’t come.”

**

“Shit!” I muttered as soon as I was inside my bedroom, I hurried over to my closet searching aimlessly through my wardrobe as I thought about what I’d wear to this dinner. Only Declan could pull up at my apartment unannounced, demanding a dinner date.

Yet for some reason, this newness made me want to kick my feet in excitement.

I rummaged through my closet, tossing clothes to the floor, trying to find the perfect dress with the little time I had. After what felt like an eternity, I pulled out a little black dress. They always said you could never go wrong with those, right? – plus it was one of my favorites.

I slipped it on, happy that I didn’t have to wear a bra with it. I brushed my hair as I stood in front of the mirror, staring at myself at different angles and wondering if I looked good enough.

“What the fuck are you doing, Paige?” I mumbled to myself, quickly reminding myself that Declan was only for a time. It didn’t matter.

Sighing heavily, I opened the door and went to the living room where he was. Despite my earlier pep talk to myself, I couldn’t help but feel nervous, wondering if he’d like what I was wearing.

He sat on the sofa, elbows resting on his knees. When he saw me, he eased up, looking at me from head to toe. He visibly

swallowed before he stood, his gaze darkening.

"Damn."

I had to stop myself from smiling. "Where are we going?" I asked.

"What would be the fun in telling you?" He winked before walking towards the door.

I shook my head as I followed behind, closing the door behind us as soon as we stepped outside of my apartment.

**

He drove us to a restaurant in town – one I'd never been to before since I'd been in Chicago. It was fancy – the type you had to have a reservation to get into. The name was *Le Lumiere* written in cursive and sitting above the entrance of the glass double doors.

I stared at the posh building as soon as I got out of the car, slightly amazed that he'd brought me to a place like this.

Declan came up beside me. "You seemed like a foodie, so I thought, why not take you to the best restaurant I know."

I smiled. "How did you guess I'm a foodie?"

"The first time I saw you at that diner with that double cheeseburger."

I grinned. "You're crazy."

He smiled, sticking out his hand to me. Without any hesitation, I took it, and we walked towards the building. As soon as we entered, a hostess was there to greet us. She had a pleasant smile on her face, looking between us both.

"Welcome to Le Lumiere. Do you have a reservation with us tonight?" she asked.

"Declan Hunt," he offered before she skimmed through the small computer.

"Oh, yes, right this way." We followed behind her as she led us to the huge hall which was almost packed with diners. They were mostly in suits and fancy dresses that made me happy with my choice of dress tonight.

We were seated in the middle of the hall, in the center of everyone else.

"A waiter will be with you shortly. Please enjoy," the hostess said. I smiled, telling her thanks before she went on her way.

I looked over at Declan who was staring at me. “How did you manage to get a reservation for this place?”

“My uncle is a chef here,” he admitted, and I grinned.

“Oh, I see.”

He nodded. We continued to browse the menu before Declan said, “You should try the wagyu beef yakiniku; it’s really good.”

“Ok, I’ll take your word for it,” I said, happy with the recommendation since I had trouble deciding what to get. Even though I’ve never tried some of the food on the menu before, the wagyu was a good *and safe* choice.

A waiter came shortly after and took our order. While we waited, I eased back in my chair, admiring the soft piano music that played in the distance. Despite the area being so full, you could barely hear the chatter that surrounded us – it was mostly just the clinking of utensils.

I glanced at Declan. “So, you’re a construction worker?”

“How’d you guess?”

I rolled my eyes, and he chuckled. “Yeah, I’m actually the project manager.”

“Oh, that’s nice. How long have you been doing it?”

He rubbed the nape of his neck. “Ah, a few years. My dad retired five years ago and left the company to me.”

“Oh, so you actually own the construction company?”

“Hunt Construction Group.”

“Ah, you’re just full of surprises, aren’t you?”

“Oh, I’m just warming up.”

I giggled.

“You’ve always lived in Chicago?” I asked.

He shook his head. “No, you won’t believe it but before this, I lived for the mountains. I lived in the mountains for almost a decade.”

I perked up a brow. “Really?” My brows furrowed. “It kinda makes sense – you look the part.”

He nodded, a grin in place. “It was all I ever wanted at one point in my life. I loved nature, I loved how natural it was to just exist in the wild and be one with the earth, but my dad called me back. Said he couldn’t sign the company away to some stranger. After much thought, I agreed.”

“Wow, do you miss it?”

“Sometimes, but my purpose is here. How about you, Paige. What do you do?”

“I’m a bookkeeper for a Tax Company.”

He raised a brow, a smile blooming on his face. “So, you’re an actual nerd.”

I snorted. “I am not.”

“You definitely are. Now look who’s full of surprises.”

I smiled, lowering my head to hide my blush.

“So, what brought you to Chicago?” He asked after a second.

I cleared my throat. “Er, I lived in a small town in Virginia that didn’t offer much. I knew I had to get out, explore the world a bit and be my best self. I got a scholarship to go to college, so I made the best of it. It was just me and my dad, but he passed right before graduation–”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” Declan said.

I swallowed the lump in my throat before clearing it. “I knew I couldn’t stay there, so I left. I interned at an accounting company for a few months and then got an entry level job shortly after. Fast forward to a month ago, and I got a job where I currently work.”

“Impressive.”

I smiled, blushing again. We continued to talk, the food came, and we ate. I hated to admit it, but Declan was actually a good guy, and I could tell he wasn’t just trying to impress me. Problem was, I still knew his intentions, and as great as moments like these were, it wouldn’t last for long.

Declan would grow weary of me and move on to his next exciting fling. I couldn’t say I minded that since I knew that would be the outcome from the very beginning, but I hated that I was getting to like him more, knowing how this would end.

Deep down, I knew what I needed to do. I needed to put a stop to this before I became too attached.

In my head, I knew tonight would be our last night.

**

After dinner, we went back to our apartment. I was smiling from ear to ear up until the moment I got to my apartment door. I paused there, Declan right behind me.

“So, this is it,” I said, looking up at him. “Thank you for tonight,

I had a good time."

"Me too."

I knew it was coming, so I waited for the moment. Declan leaned into me, and my lips parted instantly. When his soft lips brushed against mine, our breaths mingling, I pressed my lips firmly against his, my tongue slipping inside his mouth. Our tongues danced against each other, his hands creeping up to the small of my waist.

I moaned when he pulled me closer, deepening the kiss.

Quickly pulling away, I glanced at him before I rummaged through my bag for my keys. I pushed the door open in the next second, stumbling through with Declan behind me.

I giggled when he caught me yet again, kissing me firmly and passionately. I moaned against his lips, walking backwards to my room.

When we got there, I realized I hadn't cleaned up from thrashing my closet earlier. Clothes were still scattered all over the floor and on the bed.

"Sorry," I said.

There was a twinkle in his eyes as he glanced over at my mess. He bit his lips before he strolled over and caught one of my sleeping masks.

"You trust me a little bit, don't you?"

I grinned. "Only a little bit."

That seemed like all he needed to hear because he smiled, pulling the mask over my head and covering my eyes. My heart raced a little, with anticipation and nervousness.

"With one sense gone, the others will be heightened," he said. "This time, you might even come more than twice."

I shivered when I felt his warm breath at my ear. The only thing I saw was blackness, but I had to admit there was some thrill to this.

I stood there, not knowing what to do next. I could see Declan's presence, felt him as he circled me. My breath quickened when he touched me, a gasp almost leaving my lips. A shiver ran down my body, and I swallowed the nerves that rose to my throat.

The pads of his finger traced my skin, trailing down my arm. In the next instant, he hooked the straps of my dress into his hands and peeled it over my shoulders. He pulled it all the way down, his fingers grazing my skin, and my pulse raced. When my dress was in a pile at my feet, I stepped out of it, standing there in only my panties.

My breath hitched when his hand slid up my sides and then massaged my flesh through my panties before he pulled them down. It felt like my heart was about to burst out my chest in anticipation as I stood there, wondering what his next move would be.

He took my hand, and I walked towards the bed, stopping when my legs bumped into the edge. I gasped when Declan picked me up and placed me on my back.

For a while nothing happened. I heard the shuffling of his clothes and knew he was getting himself naked. The sound of his zipper was almost jarring as he pulled it in the silent room.

I swallowed hard when silence enveloped me.

“Declan, you’re killing me here,” I confessed, my voice a soft whisper, and I don’t know why I was now whispering.

He pulled me to the edge of the bed, and I gasped, my body more heated from his touch.

“You’ll only know pleasure tonight,” he said, his voice taking on a deeper tone.

I parted my legs, feeling a rush of coolness against my folds from the air conditioner in the room. Something soft lightly pressed against my inner thighs, and it took me a second to realize Declan was peppering my skin with soft kisses as he kissed from my knees, moving closer to my intimate flesh.

I moaned as I closed my eyes, my hands reaching up to grab my breast as I caressed them together, squeezing them against each other as I molded them in my hands.

When Declan kissed my aching folds, I gasped, a small but mighty jolt zinging through my body. He placed soft kisses across my mound, moving further down until I felt his lips at my entrance.

“Declan,” I sighed, my body becoming even more heated.

When I felt the warm stroke of his tongue against my folds, I moaned deeply, my body immediately reacting and wanting more.

He twirled his tongue all over my mound and then to my clit, his tongue flicking against the sensitive bud. As my legs threatened to close up around his head, he spread them wider apart, licking and lapping at my folds. When he inserted his tongue inside me, I thrashed my head from side to side, my hands tightening on my breasts while my stomach dipped with my heavy intake of breaths.

Declan’s hand crept up to my stomach, while he ate me out. He shifted one of my hands to the side and grabbed hold of my boob. His hand was large and hot against my skin, covering one breast

comfortably.

He kneaded it while he sucked me, his tongue driving as deep as it could to caress my aching walls. He lapped at my wetness, pulling at my pussy lips occasionally before he went to suckling my flesh.

I moaned, biting down on my lips as he continued to eat me out. I reached one hand down to grab his head, my fingers raking through his silky-soft hair.

As the pressure began to intensify in my body, and my stomach began to tighten, I started to roll my hips, grinding into his mouth as he stroked me with his tongue. Fucking his sexy mouth slowly, sweetly, sensually.

“Declan,” I groaned, the sensation building by the second. My hips started to move faster, and I could tell I was near my peak.

Declan didn’t let up, and I begged for the release my body craved for so desperately. My hands gripped his hair unintentionally as my orgasm crashed into me. I squealed, jolts ripping through my body as I came in his mouth.

As my body trembled on the bed, he licked my tender folds until he stopped altogether. I could still feel him there, his heavy breaths on my skin, right at my pussy.

I moaned, trying to catch my breath.

“You taste so damn good, Paige,” he said.

The bed sunk a little, and I knew he’d climbed on. The heat that radiated from his body told me he was hovering over me, and before I got the chance to confirm, he slips his tongue into my mouth, willing me to taste myself against him. As I sucked my nectar from his soft lips, I moaned, feeling the excitement in my body grow even more. I couldn’t believe I wanted him so quickly again. I wanted him so badly.

Declan tore his mouth from mine and stood at the edge of the bed. He pulled me closer to the edge and held my legs apart. My heart hammered in my chest when he wedged his tip at my entrance, the engorged head parting my folds.

Desperate to have him inside me, I reached down and blindly took his cock in my hand. I pulled him into me, my lips parting as he continued to stretch me wide open. When about half of his length was in, I fell back onto the mattress, breathing heavily. Declan slammed into me, and I screamed when he buried himself all the way to the hilt.

His moan was guttural, his grip tightening on my thighs. He

paused, his thick erection pulsing inside my tight snatch. He filled me completely, my walls tightly wrapped around his girth. He pulled back just a little, and then he slammed into me yet again. My body shifted on the bed, and I grabbed onto the sheets for some kind of stability.

Declan's strokes were powerful and deep, taking me to new heights each time. I grabbed my tits again, caressing them while he barreled inside me.

I gasped when he sank deeper, ripping my hands again from my body and holding them above my head. His grip was strong, and I felt completely useless under him while he fucked me hard and rough.

I couldn't see or touch him, but much to my surprise, I was enjoying it. Declan was using me like a doll, and I didn't mind. It felt too good to be called anything other than heavenly. I parted my legs, giving him more freedom to fuck me. My wrists were trapped in his hands, his grip tightening each time he bucked into me.

He muttered a curse under his breath and lunged into me harder. I mewled, my body peaking yet again. My walls hugged him tight, the pleasure even more fulfilling each time my walls gripped him.

Declan hissed before he released my hands and pulled out. My body jolted when he slapped his heavy cock against my sensitive pussy.

"You feel so fucking good, Paige," he said before he filled me yet again.

I screamed as my walls began to convulse around him. Just when I thought I was about to orgasm, he pulled out yet again, sucking a breath through his teeth.

Declan pulled me up from the bed, laying me on my stomach, my feet hanging off the bed. He pulled my hands behind me, holding them single-handedly while my ass jutted out to him.

I completely abandoned myself to him, allowing him to use me in whichever manner. When he entered me from behind, I moaned into the sheets, shoving my ass against him.

My heart thrummed rapidly, my body buzzing with my arousal.

"Spank me!" I exclaimed breathlessly while my body shifted under his thrusts.

Declan spanked my ass firmly, and I gasped while my walls tightened around him. My skin sparked with fire when he did so again. My core clenched around him, and I moaned as he plunged into me over and over, slapping me occasionally while he pummeled inside

my wetness.

My body crescendoed, a rush filling me that swelled and radiated throughout my entire body. For a moment, it felt like time was suspended, and my body was flooded with ecstasy. My muscles tightened, my limbs turned to mush as I lay there basking in the pleasure.

Declan's thrusts slowed almost completely before he groaned loudly and bucked into me, driving deep and making me gasp. He still held me tight, his grunts almost animalistic as he emptied himself inside me. His body trembled, and he pulled out almost completely before he bucked again, filling me with his seed.

When he released me, I flapped lifelessly onto the bed, my body still humming.

**

I snuggled up to Declan as I tried to catch my breath, my brain still mushy and disorientated from our sex session.

He turned to me, a smile on his face. "It just keeps getting better, doesn't it?" He said.

I laid there with a blank stare, still trying to process everything. Being here with Declan felt amazing and just so natural. A part of me wanted unending nights like these. The problem was, I knew it was something I couldn't have. This was temporary.

"You should go," I said, my voice barely above a whisper.

He turned his full body to me. "What?"

"You should go," I repeated.

He frowned. "Why, I thought we had fun."

"We did, but I can't do this anymore," I admitted.

"Why not? I thought we were making progress here."

I got up from the bed in search for my robe. "We both have different definitions of progress."

"Come on, Paige."

I paused in my tracks to look at him. "What? Let's be real here. We both want different things, and I don't want to continue on this path. It was good while it lasted, but I can't do this anymore."

He shook his head, raking his fingers through his hair. "This is about you wanting something serious, isn't it."

I raised a brow. "I didn't change my mind either. The days of

me having meaningless sex are over."

He got up without saying another word and pulled on his pants. I didn't know why it felt like something sharp was penetrating my chest, but that's what it felt like as I watched him gather his things. This was what I wanted to avoid in the first place. Feelings. It made this a lot more complicated.

"If that's what you want, fine." He shrugged, pulling his shirt over his shoulders and then he went through the door.

I sucked in a breath, following behind him to close the door with my legs feeling like they weighed a ton.

He stepped outside and gave me one last glance. "If you ever change your mind, you know where to find me."

My throat constricted as he stepped away from the door and disappeared to the side. I sighed heavily once he left, leaning against the door and still trying to figure out if I was doing the right thing for myself.

I had to believe I was.

Chapter 8

Declan

Paige had already made herself clear. She didn't want a casual fling. As eager as I was to change her mind, I had to respect it. Up until the night I left her apartment, I'd decided that it was just fun. I didn't want the commitment that Paige seemed to crave, no matter how good the sex was.

However, that was easier said than done. It had been a whole week and regardless of how close we lived; I'd not seen her once – not even at the pool. Sometimes, I wanted to knock on her door, convince her to let us have another go at 'fun,' but I had to stop myself.

The problem was, a week had passed, and I realized I missed her. It wasn't only just for sex either; that night at dinner, I got to see the real Paige. It wasn't just about her appearance or how good she was in bed, but she made me laugh, she made me feel at peace and heck – you couldn't blame a guy for wanting more of that. I also realized the age gap didn't matter; Paige was more mature than most of the older women I dated and she had a whole lot going for her. I guess, if I was being honest, I didn't want someone as young and fresh as Paige to get up and one day decide that she wanted something more exciting or someone younger who could set her soul on fire.

All Paige wanted was stability, but I couldn't help but think that would one day be our reality.

That morning, I got ready for work and paused at her door just as I was about to pass. I swallowed as I inched closer, wondering if I should say hello. At least we could still be friends.

As I lifted my hand to knock, I paused, my hands stopping mid-air. I pulled in a breath, muttered a curse, and then I strolled off. Paige was probably better off without me anyway. I couldn't be the guy she wanted.

**

At lunch time, I was eager to head to that diner in town I loved so much. I knew Paige had loved it, too, even though I hadn't seen her there for the past week. Yet, every day I went there regardless, hoping that day would be different, and she'd show up.

As soon as I pushed open the door and stepped inside, I looked over to the corner she always sat with her little friend from work. This time, she wasn't there, and my shoulders slowly slumped, as if a weight had suddenly been placed there – too heavy to bear.

Dave and Greg walked past me to the cashier to make their order while I stood there, staring at the spot where Paige always was. It was like she was right in front of me, even though she wasn't. I could still see her flowing black hair, tucked behind her ear, her brown eyes staring up at me, lit with lust.

"Hey, man, are you gonna order?" Dave asked, bringing me back to reality.

I cleared my throat, rubbed the nape of my neck and then headed to the cashier to make my order.

On our way out, Greg bumped me on the shoulder. "You were looking for that hottie back at the Diner, weren't you?" He asked before guzzling down a bottle of water.

"What if I was?" I quipped.

"We haven't seen her in a while. What's up with that?" Dave asked.

I shrugged. "Must've found a different spot," I said.

"Something went down between you two, didn't it?" Greg asked, a smirk already on his face.

"What gave you that impression?" I asked, trying to play it cool.

"Greg scoffed. "As if we didn't see you two disappear into the bathroom that day," he said, bumping Dave who nodded in agreement.

"Nothing happened," I lied.

"Oh, please. We've been in this game for as long as you, don't think we're idiots here," Greg said.

I shook my head, conceding. "Fine, we did. Now end of story."

Greg raised an eyebrow. "So now she's ghosting you?" His voice laced with mirth.

"That's not what's happening here," I mumbled.

"Come on, man. Do we have to beg for the four-one-one? We tell each other everything," Greg insisted.

I sighed heavily, knowing that was true. "Fine. She's still hell-bent on finding someone who's more serious. We kicked things off a few times, but she's over it."

"Now you miss her," Dave put in.

Greg scoffed. "Declan only misses the sex."

"I don't know; I feel like it's more than that," Dave said.

"You're right. I miss her, but I don't think I can give her what she wants," I confessed.

"You can't. Look, give it some time. In no time, you'll be on to the next hot ass," Greg said.

"Well, I say you give it a shot," Dave said.

Greg shook his head. "Come on, don't try to recruit people for your one-woman-religion. We both know who Declan is. You claim you miss this girl now, but things are still fresh, the sex is still exciting. But a month from now, you're gonna want someone else – someone more exciting. It's nothing new. Have you ever even taken this girl on a date before? It's all sex."

"I took her to *Le Lumiere,*" I announced.

They froze, eyes widening. "Wait, you took her to Le Lumiere?" Dave asked.

I nodded.

"The expensive ass restaurant your uncle works at?" Greg questioned, and I nodded.

"That's the one."

"And you dressed up all nice and decent?" Greg asked, still looking as surprised as Dave.

"Only thing that was missing was a tie."

Greg scoffed. "No fucking way."

"What can I say, I really like her."

Dave smiled. "I never thought I'd see the day. My boy is in love."

I flashed him a firm look. "Don't push it."

He laughed. "Well, have you ever felt this way about any other woman before?"

"You know I've never," I said.

"Listen, I say you forget about her. You don't wanna tell her you can be serious and then change your mind when you get bored." Dave advised.

"I won't get bored," I said.

Greg gave me a look that told me he wasn't convinced. "Look, I

think you should just be transparent with her; tell her you want a shot at this and see where that gets you. Ask her to be your girlfriend – heck, I don't know."

I blew out a breath.

"You have to be sure this is what you want."

That I knew.

And that was the problem.

**

I took everything Greg and Dave said into consideration, knowing they both had good points. My fear was waking up one day with Paige and thinking I needed something else. Someone else. I knew I'd not only disappoint her but myself.

For now, I craved her, wanting to be with her more than anything, even though that would mean I would have to do something I've never done before, and that's frightening. I still felt this deep need inside of me that made me want to do strange things. Like spend a lifetime with her. I wanted to know everything about her, I wanted to know her dreams, and I wanted to help her make them come true.

But one thing held me back. Fear.

Well, the fear of us failing.

The fear of not being able to commit to her.

The fear of letting her down.

The fear of leading a whole new life.

The fear of having her then losing her.

The fear of her wanting someone younger and more exciting.

Fear.

Chapter 9

Paige

If only I'd taken these measures from the very beginning, then I wouldn't be in this predicament. Trying my best to avoid Declan in the past two weeks had proven to be an extreme sport. I knew that if I did – if I put myself in his reach, then I'd fall right back into him. I didn't have the restraint to stop myself from caving in when I saw him. So, I avoided him the best way I knew how. I didn't go for night swims, and Ryan and I no longer at lunch at the Diner.

It's been two weeks, and I thought I was doing a pretty good job, but the problem was, I still missed him.

I missed his body on mine, I missed the smug look on his face and how he made me feel like I could always be myself. I missed it all, but Declan didn't want the same things as me, and I didn't want to lose sight of that for the sake of a good time.

I was twenty-six years old, and I wanted marriage and a family before it was too late. If I needed that to happen, I had to be with someone who wanted those same things.

Who was I kidding anyway? Declan was no doubt already onto the next attractive, hot girl. I was pretty sure I didn't even occupy a brain cell in his head. I was long forgotten – the girl he'd fucked from next door.

I scoffed and shook my head, hating that I felt disappointed and sad about him moving on. It was stupid because I knew from the very beginning that this would be the outcome; yet I'd set myself up to feel this way. All for the sake of good sex. And damn, was it good sex. I couldn't deny that, and even now when I thought about him, I felt tingles all over my body – tingles that reminded me that I was far from over him.

I sighed heavily and went to grab a beer from the fridge. I desperately needed a swim, but I didn't want to run into Declan by the pool and I definitely didn't want to see him there with another woman.

So, I resorted to my next best option, which was relaxing in my tub. I filled it all the way up, and lay inside, a bottle of beer resting to the side.

I closed my eyes, trying my best to relax, but Declan kept

popping up in my head. I just couldn't get him out of my head.

Two whole weeks without being able to see him, without his body against mine, taking me to new heights. It felt like torture. I slid my hand up my arm, rubbing it back and forth, trying to imitate Declan's touch. My slippery hands moved to my chest, lingering for just a moment before I slid them over my full breasts. I sucked in a breath when I grazed my nipples, causing the sensation to spread throughout my body. A moan erupted from my gut, and I slid myself further into the soap water, caressing my breasts a little slower. Every second of doing so made me miss Declan more. After all, nothing could compare to his touch — as much as I'd tried to please myself over the past weeks, nothing could compare to him.

"Fuck," I muttered, slamming my hands into the water in frustration.

I heard a knock on my door and paused, wondering if I'd heard correctly. When the tap came twice shortly after, I eased up from the tub, my heart skipping a beat.

One fact remained after weeks, no one apart from the landlord and Declan knew my apartment number. I had no issues, and the landlord would definitely call before coming, so that left one other person. Declan.

I dashed out of the tub and pulled on a robe, still dripping wet as I slipped into my slippers. Part of me told me I should avoid him this time like the other times, but for the first time in two weeks, he was knocking on my door. Somehow that excited me; I felt hopeful.

"Calm down, Paige, it might not even be him," I muttered to myself as I walked towards the door.

I swallowed hard, hand lingering by the lock before I pulled it open.

My heart lurched when I saw him. His back was turned, and it seemed as if he was about to walk off after knocking for so long.

He turned, his eyes immediately roaming my frame. I ogled him just the same, taking note of every inch of his handsome face. He visibly swallowed as he took a step towards me.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

His gaze was hot as it ran from my head to my toe.

He shrugged. "I came to see if you're still around since I haven't seen you in a while."

Heat rose to my cheeks. "What does it matter to you?" I asked.

"It shouldn't, but here I am."

I straightened my spine, refusing to show any signs of weakness. “I’m alive and well, thanks for your concern.”

“Hmm, I can see that,” he said, his gaze still lingering down my body.

“What do you want, Declan?”

“I wanna talk,” he said.

“We’re talking,” I pointed out.

He looked around. “Privately.”

I hesitated; only because I couldn’t trust myself to be alone with him. But I realized he looked serious, and that was the only reason I pushed my door open for him.

Once we were inside, I tightened the knot to my robe as I headed to the sofa. I could feel every bit of Declan’s domineering presence behind me.

I turned to him. “So, what’s this about?”

“I missed you.”

I scoffed, even though my pulse was through the roof. “You miss the sex, and I already made it clear I’m not continuing that.”

He shook his head. “It’s more than just the sex. I want to give this a shot – us.”

I’d expected him to burst out laughing and tell me this was a big joke, but judging by the seriousness on his face, It seemed it wasn’t.

“You really don’t want that,” I stated.

“I do. I came here to ask you to be my girlfriend, Paige.”

My brows furrowed. “What?”

“Will you be my girlfriend?”

I stared at him, finding his words hard to believe. I couldn’t help the short laugh that bubbled up from my gut.

“You’re not serious.”

“I am,” he insisted. “Look, all of this is new to be, but I’m certain that I want you and no one else. I haven’t been able to stop thinking about you, and I want this to work for more than just the sex, but because you’re the first person who makes me think about the future, a family and all that stuff.”

My throat constricted at his words, that fluttery feeling filling my stomach as I listened to him. It all sounded perfect, but I knew better.

“Declan, you’re only saying this because this is still very much exciting, but I promise you, a few months from now, you’re not going to want to be here, and I’ll be left heartbroken, telling myself ‘I told you so.’ I’m not ready for all that.”

He shook his head. “I know what I said about not wanting anything serious, but that was before I got to really sit and think about what I really wanted. You pop up every single time, and listen, I’m certain it’s you. You’re who I want, you should be mine.”

My eyes stung. What could I even say to that? My heart was rejoicing from what he said, but my mind still had some reservations.

“You could meet someone right now who claims they want the same thing as you, and it still might not work out. I’m here, asking you to give me a shot, knowing there’s a greater chance it might.”

I blinked a few times, nodding. He was right.

“Okay.”

His eyes widened. “Okay?”

“I’ll give you a chance, but what about the age-gap? Is that still a problem for you?” I softly said.

“It was more of a preference because a part of me was scared a younger woman would always throw it in my face, compare, or even run off with someone younger.”

I grinned. ‘You’re crazy; there’s no chance of that happening.”

A smile broke across his face that caused me to giggle. He lunged into my arms, pulling me close, his arms tightening around me as we hugged.

I closed my eyes against his chest, breathing in his familiar scent while my body buzzed in his presence.

When we slightly broke away, he lowered his lips to mine, and our mouths met in a toe-curling kiss. Heat consumed my body, my arousal blossoming between my legs. I took my time kissing him, thinking I had all the time in the world.

Epilogue

Paige

5 years later

I smiled as I watched him sleep. It had been five years, but nothing had changed, he was still the same handsome hunk of a man. The only difference was, now he'd grown his hair out a little, and it was interspersed with little grey strands I liked to tease him about ever so often.

His hair was greying, but his face was still fresh as ever, not taking away from how handsome he was.

I reached across to caress his face, leaning in to lightly kiss him on the lips. That woke him up, exposing weary green eyes.

He smiled, nonetheless. "Good morning, sweetheart."

"Good morning, love… Happy birthday," I said, and he smiled, easing up in the bed.

"Thank you."

"Another birthday with me, are you tired of me yet?" I joked.

"Never, but I should be asking you that. You're stuck with an old man for the rest of your life," he said.

I giggled. "You're far from being old," I reassured.

He shrugged. "I don't know, sweetheart. Forty-three's a big one."

"But you make it look so good," I said, placing a tender kiss on his lips. He held me tight, his tongue snaking in to caress mine.

I pulled a part to stare down at him. "I love you."

He smiled. "I love you."

I grinned as I eased off the bed. "I have a surprise for you," I announced, skipping towards the bathroom.

"What is it?" He asked from the bedroom.

My heart plummeted as I picked up the small stick from the cupboard. My hands became shaky as I stared down on it, still somehow finding it hard to believe that it was real. Declan and I had tried for the past year, but it was always a negative until now. It was

perfect timing; I found out yesterday and decided to wait until his birthday.

There was no doubt in my mind that he wanted this. It was something we talked about at nights, wrapped up in each other's arms. We already had the home, were married and the only thing that would make our little family whole was a baby.

My heart swelled with joy as I stepped out of the bathroom and looked towards the bed. He eased up when he saw the look on my face, his eyes trailing to my hands hidden behind my back.

"What is it?" He asked, his eyes twinkling with curiosity.

I couldn't stop smiling hard, my eyes welled with tears as I approached him. I leaned against the bed, my entire body buzzing with excitement.

"Come on, babe … You're killing me here," he said, laughing between each sentence.

I squealed as I stuck out my hand to him, the pregnancy test in hand. "I'm pregnant!" I exclaimed.

Declan froze, his eyes growing wide open as he stared at the stick then at me, his mouth falling to the floor.

"Wha– are you sure?" He choked a laugh, and I joined in as I stared down at the 'pregnant' written across the small screen.

"Yes!"

"Oh, my God!" He said before he pulled me into his arms, grabbing me tightly. We laughed and cried together, a host of emotions consuming us as we shared in possibly one of the best moments of our lives.

When my face was drenched with tears, Declan cupped it into his hands and kissed me passionately. I moaned at its intensity, my pulse quickening in an instant.

"We're pregnant," he stated, his voice low and soft.

I nodded, finding it hard to hold back the tears.

"When did you find out?"

"Yesterday," I admitted. "I wanted to surprise you today on your birthday."

"I'm so happy I decided to hit on you that night at the pool," he said.

I laughed, swatting him across the arm. "I'm happy I gave you a chance."

He kissed me, and I squealed when he rolled me onto my back. I already knew what time it was.

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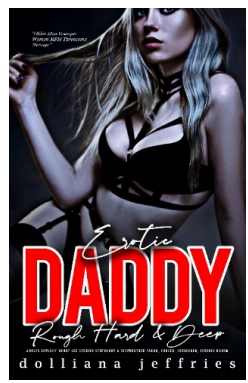

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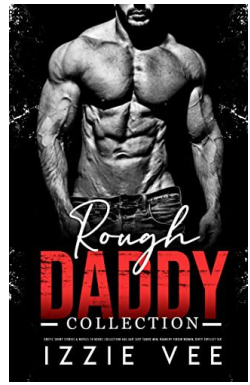

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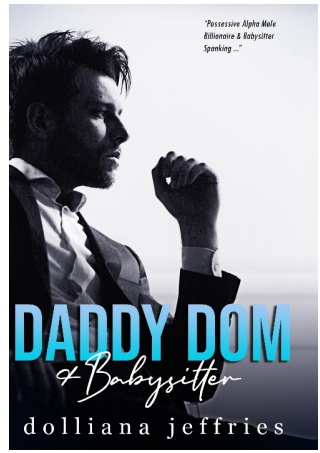

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